

MEDICAL MISSIONS NEEDED IN AFRICA

In That Way It Will be Possible to Get Close to the People.

Dr. Catherine L. Mabie, of the Congo Mission, American Baptist Foreign Mission society, says: "The revealing of the Christian's God, the only vital reason for Christian missionary endeavor anywhere, meets two distinctly opposing forces in Africa—Mohammedanism and spirit-worship, the highest and lowest forms of non-Christian religions.

"Mohammedanism has carried the knowledge of God—omnipotent, misanthropic, arbitrary, one God—to large numbers of African folk. But Mohammedanism has utterly failed in apprehending the tender, sacrificial, just, refining God, and so everywhere has failed to develop these essential qualities in its adherents. In the last analysis man is always like his God. The God of Hosea, the God who is like Jesus, the friend of sinners and acquainted with grief, the lover of little children whom He gathered in His arms and blessed, the comrade of receptive spirits with whom He fraternized and taught the deep truths of life, regardless of all mere fleshly habiliments of race and sex, such a God is as unknown in the Mohammedan as in the pagan world. But the Mohammedan world has proven itself much more difficult of approach with this fuller revelation than has the pagan world. The Christian missionary, confident of his message, finds the Mohammedan community a walled city, well garrisoned and supremely satisfied with its own conception of God, contemptuous of the Christian propaganda in almost all of its recognized avenues of approach. The medical missionary with his tender, healing ministry and patient, unrelenting, disinterested service of love holds the open sesame most patent for the lifting up of the fast barred Mohammedan gates of brass, that his

God of grace and glory may enter. He himself is a concrete example, a demonstration of Christianity, which it is difficult for those whom he serves either to despise or discredit, and so he gains a hearing for the Gospel. The "faith cometh by hearing." In attempting to stem the great Mohammedan invasion of Africa, more emphasis should be placed on the desirability of planting medical missionaries at strategic points of vantage all along the line which divides Mohammedanism from pagan Africa, for they undoubtedly are peculiarly equipped to meet the onslaught and to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over Mohammedanism to peoples about to exchange fetishism for the cult of Islam.

"The Congo animist has almost no knowledge of anatomy, knows nothing of physiological processes and nothing of pathology. He attributes all of his derangements, physical and mental, to spirit interference, either direct as in actual spirit possession, or indirect as through witchcraft machinations. Roughly speaking, he believes that all mental aberrations are due to spirit possession. It naturally follows that he has no sane notion of therapeutics. With charms and fetiches and magic brews, he strives to circumvent and ward off, or drive out disease-inflicting spirits or propitiates them with gifts and fetish rites. When disease is persistent or alarming, or results in death, he has recourse to his medicine men with their various tests and ordeals for detecting and dealing with witchcraft. Towns infested with

death-bringing spirits are shifted to more propitious sites as a last resort. "Into this maze of superstition, ignorance and fear has come the medical missionary with his demonstrative theories of etiology and hygiene, with his wonder working surgical kit and medicine chest and kindly care, with his confident, optimistic note in the face of disease, with his marvellous power to hold death at bay and even to bring back from the borderland those about to cross to the great unknown. In the dread, mysterious realm of sickness he speaks with authority and achieves beneficent results, marvellous in their eyes. His works accredit him a hearing for the message which he brings concerning "Nzambi."

"The well trained physician is usually a practical psychologist, whose habit of mind is to approximate the mental state of those whom he would help, and so he is peculiarly adapted to guide the superstitious animist out of the begoggled bogs of spiritism into the highlands of vision where fear takes flight. The first victory which the gospel of Jesus Christ gains among animistic peoples is the freeing them from the awful bondage of fear, under which they have cowered for centuries.

"In the midst of this appalling state of affairs the medical missionary with his microscope and contagious optimism has set himself to do his bit toward making the great world of central Africa a possible place in which to live, not merely in which to exist. He is not only treating the diseases

to which the native is prone, and placing his fatalistic irresponsibility for health conditions by a more wholesome state of mind which will prepare him to cooperate in subduing the hostile encamped against him.

The greater part of animistic Africa is not a white man's country. Its heat, excessive humidity, myriad insect life and general unwholesomeness have made it a very difficult field for missionary endeavor. Missionaries' children must be sent out of the country at a very early age. Losses through death and impaired health have been especially on the west coast, exceedingly high. The medical branch of the service is very necessary for the

care and conservation of the mission ary body itself, and for the blessing conferred on the Africans.

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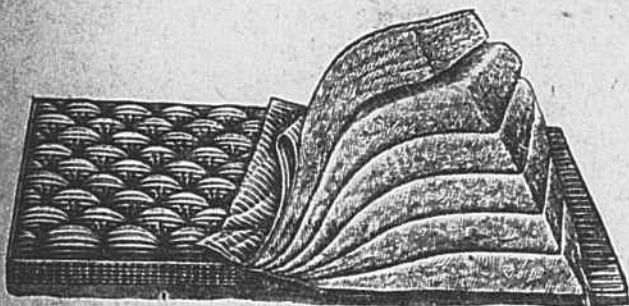
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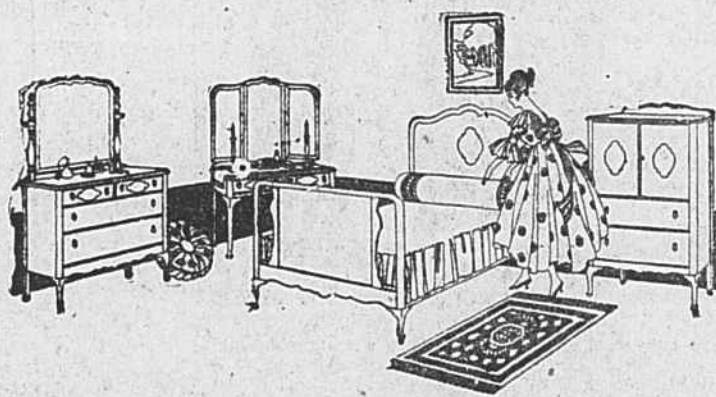
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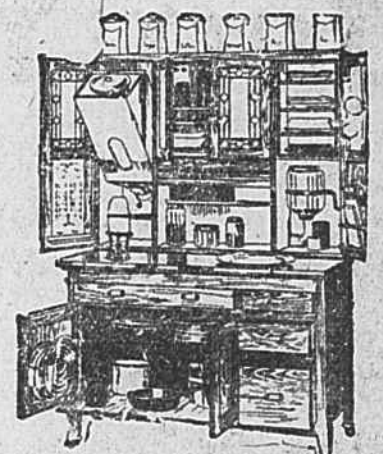
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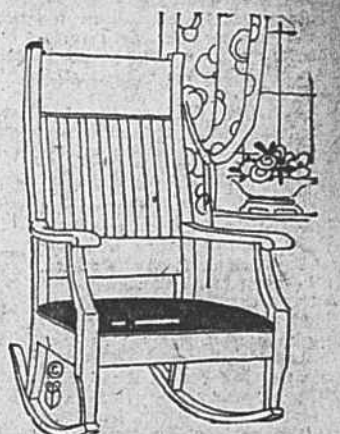
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